



WELCOME TO THE HOCKEN

Friends of the Hocken Collections

BULLETIN NUMBER 10 : March 1995

On schools and education

E DUCATION is one of the fields best covered in the Hocken Library. Its book collections contain not only all the substantive works on New Zealand educational theory and policy, but also large numbers of individual school histories and other associated works, readily accessible through the cataloguing systems. And that is just the start. For the educational or social science research student, as well as for the local historian or genealogist, the Hocken Archives are treasure trove indeed.

T HIS guide concentrates on the Hocken's unique archival resources concerning education in Otago, and is written with the needs and priorities of the researcher in mind. Even so it does not pretend to be an exhaustive description of all the material relating to 'education', or even to 'education in Otago', available in the Hocken Archives. Many significant references to education are to be found, for example, in personal journals and papers, official papers and publications, and other miscellaneous items.

1. Otago Education Board holdings

The Hocken Library is fortunate to hold one of the best Education Board collections in the country. These holdings are magnificently indexed and should be consulted carefully before pursuing any specialised research more deeply. In general, the materials are in good condition — some very good. The 19th century printed records are variable in quality and some of the early typewritten material is badly faded. All told, however, the researcher is well served by the quality of the preservation of the Otago Education Board material, selectively described here under 14 sub-heads:

a. *Minute Books 1856–1989*

This comprehensive series is indexed in both 'rough minutes' and 'fair minutes' form, although the division is not consistent. Fair minutes are indexed for the period 1856–1920, and rough minutes for 1866–1961. The Board minutes prior to 1877 tend to be more comprehensive than those of later years. Minutes are useful to a researcher who already knows from other evidence of the events which lie behind the bland record. As they stand on their

own, however, the minutes will not take researchers very far in their quest for adequate explanations of particular events.

b. *Outward Letterbooks (indexed), plus index registers 1856–1930*

These letterbooks are a magnificent primary research source for anyone who has focused on an area of research. The sheer bulk of the material available is the greatest challenge. Essentially the letterbooks contain copies of all letters sent from the office of the Education Board, usually over the signature of the Board Secretary of the day. Much of the material is concerned with the day-to-day trivia of running an extensive system of schools and is of limited research value. But the remainder provides important insights into Board politics, the functioning of the teaching profession, the role of urban and rural school committees, life in the schoolrooms of the province, expectations and assumptions about childhood, and so on. Working Education Board policies are revealed in these records in a way not duplicated elsewhere. Once some skill has been gained in using the indexes, the researcher should be able to gain maximum value from these letterbook holdings.

c. *Register of Inward Correspondence 1886–1935*

A substantial number of Inward letters have also survived, though neither the coverage nor the indexing is as complete in their case. Where the material has not survived, this register is inevitably of limited importance. On particular issues, however, the record has more value because it identifies particular letters received which can be matched to outward

correspondence.

d. *Government Letterbooks 1879–1925*

The content of these letterbooks (copies of outward correspondence) is restricted to correspondence between the Education Board in Dunedin and the Department or the Minister of Education in Wellington. This material is especially valuable for researching the changing relationship between the provincial board and the government department which was created after the passing of the Education Act 1877. In general, this correspondence addresses significant issues of policy and policy change. The material is indexed and generally is in a very good state of preservation.

e. *Circular Books 1872–1953*

This archive contains copies of printed material circulated from the Board Office to all schools in Otago, and most of it is excellently preserved. Covering as it does everything from school hours, syllabus requirements, duties and responsibilities of teachers, powers and duties of school committees, school committee elections etc., the material is of major potential use to researchers. The Hocken is especially fortunate to contain such a comprehensive file as this one.

f. *Clipping Books 1877–1989*

These books are especially valuable to researchers because they provide pasted clippings of newspaper reports on matters which pertained to the Board's sphere of influence. Generally the clippings come from the two major local newspapers, the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star*. On occasion, items from other newspapers throughout New Zealand have been included. The books offer researchers a handy way to reduce the chore of reading through endless newspaper files or microfilms — but a word of warning! The clipping books represent selections made by officials in the Board's employ at the time. They were not necessarily rigorous or consistent in their selection, and the prudent researcher will use these books more as starter exercises leading to more rigorous searches of newspapers and other files on particular topics. Generally speaking, the clippings are in an excellent state of preservation.

g. *Truancy Record Books 1892–1917*

Although listed in brief summary, these well-preserved books provide an outstanding record of the age, gender and locality of pupils com-

ing from homes not supportive of the school system. What emerges is a snapshot of life in Otago in these years which was often significantly different from that portrayed in public platform rhetoric.

h. *Truancy Officer Letter Book 1902–1914*

On occasion this provides fuller evidence than that contained by the record books alone. The two sources together provide a splendid insight into the economic and social constraints which affected the school attendance of many New Zealand children of school age during this period.

i. *Truancy Exemption Register 1936–1958*

This archive (which I have not personally used) should provide valuable evidence as to the working policies of the Board in a later period, and may well also show the degree to which reality varied from platform rhetoric of the day.

j. *Education Ordinances, Reports, Regulations and Acts 1856–1875*

This very useful file of printed documentation was built up during the time of Dr John Hislop, first Secretary of the Otago Education Board. Hislop, who came to Otago as a trained and experienced teacher from Scotland, was interested and knowledgeable about education legislation in the United Kingdom and maintained this interest when he entered the Board's employ. The legislation he collected in this period included material from the Australian colonies, as well as other New Zealand provinces, and several major reports from other English-speaking countries. This provides a useful resource for researchers whose topics are not primarily limited to the Province of Otago. The file also provides an insight into the resources which Hislop used when he drafted provincial and national educational legislation over the period 1856–1877.

k. *Registers of Teachers Employed by the Board 1878–1914*

These several registers, all alphabetically indexed and in very good condition, are a magnificent resource for researchers interested in the background, qualifications and career achievements of Otago teachers over the period covered by these files, as well as being of considerable use to genealogists. The Registers were confidential documents held by Board officials who sought to advise school committees about applicants for appointment to

teaching positions. The first volume, for example, was initially known as ‘the Character book’ and volume-locked in the Secretary’s office: the remains of the lock on the volume are still to be seen. Nearly all the names of Otago’s teachers who were permanently employed are filed in these volumes. The material on each included age, background, qualifications and current reports on their professional abilities by the various Otago Inspectors. Since the Inspectors were writing confidentially to the Board their comments were often brutally frank and sometimes bore little relationship to other comments made about the same teachers in public. These registers need to be treated sensitively by researchers, as some of the material — outlining flaws without ambiguity — could still embarrass descendants of individual teachers.

l. *Pupil Teacher Registers 1886–1931*

These files, which are in good condition, provide basic material for genealogists as well as for anyone researching the major avenue of recruitment of Otago’s teachers until 1910.

m. *Inspectors’ Letterbooks 1877–1910*

Since Inspectors were the providers of quality control for most of the Otago Education Board’s history, these files provide major evidence of the way in which these officials sought

to promote standards and initiate change in the classrooms. To date they have not been used in any significant way by educational researchers, and the same can be said for the files of *Inspection Reports, 1881–1954*.

n. *Architect Department Letterbooks 1881–1930*

Most of these files seem to be working files. Each Board had its own architects who superintended the designing and building of schools and teachers’ residences. Architecture is a topic of growing research interest because it is increasingly recognised that when a school is built it is designed to facilitate certain kinds of teaching/learning experiences and to exclude others. Included in recent acquisitions, for example, is a detailed file (dated 23 December 1885, and still in excellent condition) relating to plans and specifications of the High St Primary School. There is, in fact, a considerable holding of fully-indexed school plans within the Otago Education Board collection.

2. **School Committee records**

Approximately one-third of the schools associated with the old Otago Education Board now have pupil registers and/or other records deposited in Hocken Archives. Content and quality vary greatly, but there is always the possibility of exciting surprise. Some contain school

plans and specifications as well as fascinating glimpses of school life as it was then lived. The George Street Committee records, for instance, include a 'School Behaviour Book' drawn up by the headmaster in 1910 and detailing how pupils are to behave in classroom and playground, how they are to address teachers, etc. It is a wonderful insight into the daily life of the schoolroom. The same records contain a book of garment samples (remarkably well preserved) showing what primary school girls were expected to achieve in their sewing classes. Of particular importance to family researchers are the alphabetically indexed transcriptions of school admission registers gradually being produced by local genealogists.

It should be noted that the records of individual North Otago schools, held by Hocken Archives until 1989, were then transferred on deposit to the North Otago Museum, Oamaru. As for Southland records, on the cessation of the Southland Education Board, its surviving records were lodged in the Invercargill Public Library.

3. 'Otago Education Board Schools'

This very useful resource, compiled by Verna Rutherford, records and locates all primary schools opened and closed under the Board's auspices until 1985. The index also lists all known histories of individual schools published for various anniversaries and these, in turn, often contain local information and photographs not to be found elsewhere.

4. Photographs

Photographs are an important research source, often clarifying topics of contemporary debate and providing an immediate insight into the schooling of the times. In addition to the Hocken Library's outstanding general photographs collection, the Otago Education Board material contains a specifically indexed photographs collection of school-related topics. The archives of individual schools also hold many photographs of pupils, staff and buildings.

5. Otago High Schools Board records

These records, also now mainly housed in the Hocken Archives, offer outstanding source material for all researchers interested in post-primary schooling in Dunedin. The Board at first administered Otago Boys and Otago Girls High Schools: much later, Kings High and then Queens High were added to its re-

sponsibilities. Four groups of records are of main importance:

a. *Minutes 1878–1989*

There are numerous volumes of these. The caution needs repeating that while official minutes are very useful, they need to be supplemented by in-depth research on individual topics of interest.

b. *Outward Letters 1871–1919*

Much of this long run of correspondence relates to working trivia, but the resource is still a goldmine for researchers following up special interests.

c. *Registered Files Inwards and Outwards Correspondence 1902–1959*

The Otago High Schools Board is one of a rare number of local educational authorities to have retained most inwards correspondence. The material is in boxes rather than volumes, but is fairly well indexed.

d. *Clipping Books 1914–1989*

A comprehensive range of newspaper clippings in numerous volumes, compiled by Board staff. Very useful to researchers, though not necessarily guaranteed to include or reflect all public comment on the Board's activities.

6. Further holdings

As mentioned in the introduction, this overview does not include all the educational material held by the Hocken Library, or even by Hocken Archives.

There are, for instance, individual holdings of some of Dunedin's Catholic schools; scattered material relating to early private schools; the records of King Edward Technical College and Taieri High School; and also of Cromwell College — although, generally speaking, secondary schools beyond Dunedin are not well represented.

Indexes and lists are provided and the Archives staff are always available to offer assistance.

*Compiled for the Friends of the Hocken Collections
by David McKenzie,
with the assistance of Beverley Booth.
Edited by George Griffiths; designed by Gary
Blackman.*